

A
METHOD
OF
RAISING HOPS
IN
RED BOGS.

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THE Society desires it to be understood, that as a body, they are not responsible for any opinion or representation of facts contained in the following papers, and will be much obliged to any gentleman, farmer, or other person, that will be pleased to point out any error, or improvement in the several matters treated of, by letters addressed to their Acting Secretary, the Rev. DR. LYSTER, Hawkins-street, Dublin.





A
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OF
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IN
RED BOGS.

THE Society reprint the following Letter from one of their Members, in hopes some new experiments may be made in a species of farming, of so much consequence to this country. Since it has succeeded with the author, and the usefulness of it is thereby out of the question, we have reason to hope it will be doubly welcome to the curious, as a valuable and a new discovery. It was first printed in the first volume of the Society's Weekly Observations, p. 121.

GENTLEMEN,

‘ AS I believe your invitations to a general cor-
‘ respondence were more than mere formality, I
‘ have reason to hope for your favourable accept-
‘ ance of the following hints. They relate to a
A ‘ subject

‘ subject of great importance to this kingdom, and
‘ are grounded not upon conjectures, or the infor-
‘ mation of others, but on my own experience.

‘ It must be matter of concern to all, to see
‘ great tracts of land lie entirely usefess in a
‘ country, which has the utmost reason to husband
‘ all advantages with care ; such are the many
‘ and extensive bogs to be met with every where ;
‘ which, except a poor coarse pasture on the bet-
‘ ter kinds, afford no other profit to the owner,
‘ than what can be made by burning the soil of
‘ them in turf. I hope therefore it will be an at-
‘ tempt agreeable to gentlemen of your public
‘ spirit, to introduce a culture of them, which, at
‘ a small expence, will turn to great account,
‘ and to make those unprofitable lands, without
‘ much labour in reclaiming them, bear a good
‘ and valuable crop. The crop I mean is hops ;
‘ and the bogs, in which I have reared them with
‘ most success, the worst and most usefess of all
‘ others—the red bogs. The profit has for many
‘ years fully answered my expence, and what has
‘ turned to my advantage, will do so with every
‘ body else in the same method of improvement.

‘ Few

‘ Few are so far strangers in this matter as not
‘ to know, that among the several kinds of bogs,
‘ the red are deservedly esteemed the worst.
‘ Black bogs yield some kind of pasture, of a finer
‘ or a coarser grass, according to the nature of
‘ the bog : they are besides more easily reclaim-
‘ able, and if the upper surface be skimmed off
‘ and the fods burnt, they afford their own ma-
‘ nure a large quantity of red heavy ashes,
‘ strongly impregnated with salts ; whereas the
‘ red bog has none of these good qualities ; it has
‘ a spongy, light, fungous, variegated surface,
‘ bears no grass, and when you come to burn it,
‘ yields but very little ashes, and even those white,
‘ fleaky, light and insipid. This is so well known,
‘ that these bogs are never charged with rent,
‘ but thrown into the survey of farms as unprof-
‘ itable lands. I have indeed reclaimed some of
‘ this kind of bog, in a different manner, and
‘ for other purposes than for hops, and therefore
‘ cannot join in calling them unprofitable ; but
‘ since they are generally so esteemed, and ac-
‘ cordingly neglected, it will be of equal service
‘ to my country, to promote the culture of them
‘ under hops, as if they were really so.

‘ Round

‘ Round the spot intended for your hop-yard,
‘ dig a trench seven or eight feet wide to drain
‘ off the water, give it all the depth the fall of
‘ your bog will bear, and if you cut it into the
‘ gravel it is the better; make your trenches
‘ straight, and every where of an equal breadth;
‘ to that end lay them out and mark them by the
‘ line. The score or mark is made in uplands
‘ with the spade, but in bogs a hay-knife is much
‘ better.—One man will cut faster with this instru-
‘ ment, than five men in the common way.

‘ When that is done, take off the first or up-
‘ per sods of your intended trench with the spade,
‘ but beware of cutting your sods too large; they
‘ are then inconvenient for carriage, and increase
‘ the labour of removing them. Make them of
‘ that size that they may be easily turned up, and
‘ thrown with pitchforks on a wheel-barrow; you
‘ may then, at a small expence, convey them
‘ where they may be useful. The proper use of
‘ them is to fill the adjacent bog-holes, and level
‘ the uneven places of your bog. However, it
‘ will be necessary to reserve a few of them for fa-
‘ cing your ditch, in the same way as you do up-
‘ land ditches.

‘ When

‘ When the first sod is pared proceed to dig
‘ your trench with flanes : the soil thrown up will
‘ be as good turf as any other, and defray the ex-
‘ pence of trenching ; and this I desire may be un-
‘ derstood as a general direction, and applied
‘ wherever a trench or hole of any size is to be cut
‘ out in a bog. By this means, the charge of
‘ digging is made up to the farmer in good turf,
‘ and the labour pays itself.

‘ In cutting your trench, be careful to leave a
‘ gun on each side of your plot : this is a piece of
‘ bog uncut, designed as a passage in and out, with
‘ a channel for the water bored in it ; it must be
‘ nine or ten feet wide, and the arched channel un-
‘ der it of sufficient height and breadth to let the
‘ water through. In short, a gun is a natural bridge,
‘ and must have the same qualities, strength in
‘ the arch to afford a safe passage over, and wide-
‘ ness equal to the discharge of water. Two men
‘ with spades or shovels, thrusting from each side,
‘ till their tools meet, will make one in a little
‘ time.

‘ There is another circumstance to be observed
‘ in the making of your trench ; at the lowest
‘ part

‘ part of it, where the water is discharged, leave a
‘ bank two feet high uncut, to keep it to that
‘ height in the whole surrounding drain. By this
‘ means you have a reservoir at hand for the use
‘ of your hop-yard; which, whenever a dry
‘ summer happens, will require to be well watered;
‘ and besides a ready and cheap manure from the
‘ sludge or mud, which will lodge at the bottom of
‘ your trench, when the current is checked by
‘ this little bank. Some indeed may fear, that the
‘ inclosed ground may suffer by this method, and
‘ be kept too moist by the water about it; but
‘ this I am by long experience satisfied, is a
‘ groundless apprehension. The flowing water,
‘ with a fair vent before it, has little lateral pressure,
‘ but directs its way where it has the freest
‘ passage. I have made large drains in a bog, and
‘ kept them full of water within a foot of the
‘ brim, and found no inconveniencies attending
‘ it.

‘ When your surrounding trench is finished, at
‘ four feet distance from the inner edge of it,
‘ and exactly parallel, draw another inside trench
‘ two feet wide and two feet deep; let it be
‘ drawn

‘ drawn like the former round the ground, and
‘ by the line; then fill it up with proper soil, and
‘ plant fallows in it, or any other aquaticks fit for
‘ poles. They will thrive here exceedingly, and
‘ with proper care, in six years time be ready for
‘ the use of the hop-yard. The earth about
‘ them is kept moist by the bog about it, and
‘ their roots preserved from frosts and winds by
‘ the distance of their stand from the edge of the
‘ main drain; and therefore nothing can prevent
‘ their growth: to forward it as much as possible,
‘ two cautions should be used. The first to strip
‘ off the side shoots when tender, to prevent their
‘ running out into strong branches, which impair
‘ the body of the tree; the second to throw up
‘ the mud out of your trench upon their roots,
‘ and that way to supply them with fresh nourish-
‘ ment. This should be done when your fallows
‘ are two years old; at that time and in the heat of
‘ summer, cut the little bank, which keeps up the
‘ water in your trench, and leave the drain en-
‘ tirely dry; the mud at bottom will grow stiff
‘ and be easily thrown up, and your trees ma-
‘ nured at very little charge.

‘ When

‘ When you have prepared and inclosed your
‘ bog in the manner described in my former letter,
‘ at fifteen or twenty feet distance from the fallow
‘ trench stretch a line parallel to any one side of
‘ your inclosure. To this line tie rags or feathers
‘ nine feet asunder from each other; and
‘ when your line is stretched upon the ground,
‘ at every mark or feather drive a sharp stick into
‘ the bog to determine the center of your hop-
‘ hills. Having finished your first row, remove
‘ your line to nine feet distance, and mark out a
‘ second; from that proceed to a third row, and
‘ so on until you have finished the whole plot. The
‘ ground being thus set out, and the centers of
‘ your hop-hills regularly disposed at nine feet
‘ distance from each other; your first work will
‘ be to dig a hole at every center, three feet wide
‘ and three feet deep; to lay the upper sods of
‘ it in the hollows of your bog, and to make turf
‘ of the remaining soil. If you proceed in your
‘ work that summer, your turf must be wheeled
‘ off immediately, spread and made upon other
‘ ground; otherwise it would prevent the passage
‘ of the tumbrils, which you have occasion for in
‘ your next business. This is to fill your holes
‘ with proper earths or composts in order to receive

‘ ceive the hop sets, which are to be planted here
‘ and afterwards managed in the same method as
‘ in other places. To do this, it is obvious that
‘ much earth will be wanted in a plantation of
‘ any considerable size; and how to provide him-
‘ self with a sufficient quantity at a cheap rate, is
‘ of great importance to the farmer. My method
‘ is as follows. In the upland nearest to the bog,
‘ I take off the sward of a small plot with the hoe
‘ or winged plough: I burn it, and by thorough
‘ ploughing mix the ashes with the mould.
‘ To these I add a little lime, rotten dung, or rich
‘ garden mould, and throw the whole together
‘ into heaps where it heats and rots, and in a
‘ little time affords the richest compost, and the
‘ best soil for hops. I have made artificial earths
‘ in this manner not only for the present purpose,
‘ but in other improvements also, and found it,
‘ upon trial, a great deal less expensive, than it
‘ appears at the first view. The carriage of them
‘ to the bog is the heaviest article in the expence,
‘ and this also is much alleviated by the breadth
‘ of the allies, and the method of planting the
‘ hops in holes. As the tough surface of
‘ your bog is no where broken, but in the very
‘ spots where the hops are planted, it affords a

‘ safe passage for your cattle : and as your walks
‘ are six feet wide, the hills being but three feet
‘ over, and the centers nine feet distant, you may
‘ make use of cars and tumbrils, a cheap and
‘ commodious carriage.

‘ I own, that notwithstanding these precau-
‘ tions, this improvement is expensive; but raising
‘ hops in any ground is so, and, I am sure, grea-
‘ ter in the most favourable upland situation, than
‘ in bog. A very little arithmetic will shew, that
‘ ditching and inclosing, which in bog is no ex-
‘ pence, the turf made at the same time being
‘ equal to the charge; that ploughing, harrowing,
‘ fallowing, and digging, which in my method
‘ are intirely saved, with the additional articles
‘ of dunging, hoeing, and paring the allies in
‘ uplands, are more than an equivalent for all the
‘ labour and expence attendant on bog-hops;
‘ and from fifteen years experience, I can ven-
‘ ture to affirm, that the produce from the latter
‘ is as great in quantity, and, in quality, as
‘ good. Many reasons might be given why it
‘ should be so; some of them I beg leave to lay
‘ before your readers : they may be necessary to
‘ remove

‘ remove the prejudices, which generally attend
‘ new projects, and to make this improvement
‘ as common in this kingdom as, I am sure, it
‘ will be beneficial whenever it becomes so,

‘ Were it particular to my method, I should
‘ reckon it the first advantage of it, that the hills
‘ stand at nine feet distance ; but as this may be
‘ imitated in uplands, I shall only say in general,
‘ that nothing is more prejudicial to hops than
‘ close planting.

‘ The care taken in uplands to hoe and pare
‘ the allies sufficiently shews, that it is esteemed a
‘ disadvantage to have any quantity of grafs
‘ growing among hops : red bogs are, by their
‘ nature, free from this inconvenience, and, at
‘ least for many years, till the surface is intirely
‘ altered, throw up none, or very little ; how
‘ far planters are right in their opinion, that a
‘ coat of grafs impairs the action of the sun upon
‘ the fruit I shall not here examine, but while that
‘ opinion holds, it will ever be a reason in favour
‘ of *Red bogs*.

‘ Watering

‘ Watering hop grounds in dry seasons, though,
‘ from the great expence attending it, too fre-
‘ quently neglected, is certainly of great benefit
‘ to the crop. This may be done in bogs with
‘ great conveniency and little charge. The sur-
‘ rounding drain is a constant reservoir where the
‘ planter may be readily supplied ; and whoever
‘ understands the culture and the growth of
‘ hops, will reckon this no small encourage-
‘ ment.

‘ It is agreed among hop planters, that low
‘ grounds have great advantages ; they are little
‘ exposed to droughts, and are sheltered by their
‘ situation from destructive storms. Bogs enjoy those
‘ in common with the rest, besides, as long ex-
‘ perience has informed me, some peculiar to them-
‘ selves ; they do not suffer so much as other flats
‘ by the rains of a wet season or the mildews of a
‘ dry one. Whether their spunginess affords a
‘ passage to the waters, which lodge in other
‘ grounds, and their constant moisture prevents the
‘ bad effects of too much heat, I shall not now ex-
‘ amine ; but the fact itself is certain, they are
‘ free from the inconveniencies above-mentioned,
‘ and,

‘ and, what is more remarkable, from those
‘ swarms of insects, which too often infest our up-
‘ land hops.

‘ I must add, that in this kind of planting the
‘ top roots have liberty to shoot as far as nature
‘ designed they should : they have three feet of
‘ the richest soil to go through before they run
‘ into the bog, and even there, when once it is
‘ well drained, they will meet with better juices,
‘ than in a cold stiff clay, or a sharp sour gravel,
‘ which are the common upland bottoms.

‘ I shall conclude by obviating a doubt, which
‘ might perhaps occur to some of your readers ;
‘ poles will stand in these bogs as firm as in upland
‘ ground. The earth laid into the holes, pressed
‘ together and confined by the tough stringy sub-
‘ stance of the bog, will sufficiently support them,
‘ and they need be sunk no deeper than improvers
‘ direct in other hop-yards.

‘ You may observe, gentlemen, that I have en-
‘ gaged no farther in hop-husbandry, than to ex-
‘ plain what was peculiar to my method. The
‘ in-

‘ ingenious treatise published on that subject, under your own inspection, will inform the reader in the general management of them; and to that I must refer him, till you are pleased to resume a subject, which deserves your second thoughts as well as any other. When you do, I shall beg leave to throw in my mite, and send you some observations I have made upon the usual culture of them.

I am, &c.

A.

We cannot dismiss the reader without observing to him, that it were to be wished many gentlemen would employ their leisure hours in the country, in the way of our ingenious correspondent in making experiments, and attempting new improvements. That, in which he has succeeded, was certainly as unpromising as any other, and affords encouragement to explore more of those untrodden paths, which, we find, lead to private profit and to public wealth. Black-bogs promise better than the red, and, since these turn to so good

good account, why should we not try the others? Or if we are unwilling to run hazards, let us at least improve where we may do it with more safety. We do not want good land to employ our industry upon, and, if so much can be made out of the worst, what may not be expected from the best?



